

Abstract

The invention relates to a personal computer system in a vehicle, a system for supporting a utility station relative to a base, a flexible support mechanism, a console for retractably supporting a utility station in an automobile, and a method for supporting an object. The flexible support mechanism includes a plurality of links connected together to form a chain of links, a plurality of connectors for connecting the links, and a locking mechanism for selectively locking the links together to rigidize the support mechanism. The systems include a flexible support mechanism and a utility station. The flexible support mechanism is connected to the utility station and a base. The base may be provided in a

- 10 console or housing. A computer may be provided in the utility station. The system may also include a movable connection point where the support mechanism connects to the base. The method for supporting an object includes providing an object at the end of a flexible support mechanism, moving the object to a desired location by moving the flexible support mechanism, and rigidizing the flexible support mechanism such that the support mechanism
- 15 becomes rigid to firmly position the object at the desired location. A break-away feature is provided where the support mechanism de-rigidizes in the event a vehicle is in an accident. A lock out feature is also provided to deter the driver from using the personal computer while the vehicle is moving. The invention also relates to a support mechanism for supporting objects, such as medical or dental devices, and is, thus, useful in industries such
- 20 as the medical and dental fields, in addition to the automobile industry, among others.